

Chapter 4 Enter Modifiers for Detail: Part 1—Adjectives

Additional paper or project ideas

1. Read Heidi Schmidt's webpost listed in the Suggested Readings section (above). Based on the order of adjectives described, select language examples to analyze. Do any of the data violate the 'rule'? Use your data to create a presentation or paper based on your findings.

Data could be derived from

A. Advertisements (print or video)

B. Poems (e.g., e. e. cummings, William Carlos Williams, Robert Creeley)

C. Conlangs (i.e., created languages) for television (e.g., Game of Thrones, Into the Badlands, The 100), movies (e.g. Harry Potter series, Avatar, Star Trek, Despicable me), or texts (e.g., Harry Potter, Star Wars, 1984).

D. Another language you are studying

E. Your favorite song lyrics

2. To help you bring the expected order of English adjectives to the forefront of your consciousness, imagine you have a friend who is learning English. You would like to help this person internalize the English adjective order. Create a flow chart for your friend and other English language learners that will help them select the correct order when they are constructing written sentences.
3. Here is another way you can discover variety of English adjective use. Create a list of 20 sentences that feature serial attributive adjectives (something along the lines of *The seven, useful, large, antique, round, green, city lights are in the garage.*) In some, adhere to the order. In others, vary the expected order. Now, ask native speakers to rate the sentences based on their judgments of how grammatical each sentence is. For instance,

7 (excellent)

5 (acceptable)

3 (acceptable but odd)

1 (Ungrammatical)

Then, share your results with your peers and compare what you all have found. Does everyone agree?

4. Adjectives, Large Language Models (LLMs), and gender bias. Read Mihaylov & Shtedritski (2024) and summarize their findings about gender bias in LLMs. Why do think looking at adjectives in particular is a good strategy to examine gender biases? Can you come up with your own research project based on this article?
5. Adjectives in Marketing and Business. Read the short article in *The Economist* about luxury brands and the adjectives associated with them. Then, pick some brands you personally like and conduct a survey. Ask 10-15 people to describe the brands. Then, analyze the adjectives they provided. What do they show? How are the brands perceived? Do you agree with that perception yourself? Why or why not?

